

THE LAST AUSFLUG

Wilhelm S. Wurzer (1948-2009) Memorial Service
Duquesne University Chapel
27 February 2009



How does one record in a few minutes a friendship and collaboration that lasted for 30 years? Wilhelm Wurzer and I first met in the summer of 1978 when I taught a graduate seminar here at Duquesne as Visiting Professor.

A decade later, I published several of his essays – one on “The Occlusion of the Subject in Heidegger and Lacan,” another on “Postmodernism,” and a third on “The Critical Difference in Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory.” In 1990, we co-authored an essay together entitled “Filming – Inscriptions of Denken.” His book *FILMING AND JUDGMENT: BETWEEN HEIDEGGER AND ADORNO* was the first book to appear in my Philosophy and Literary Theory series for Humanities Press – the original source of your Simon Silverman (no relation) Phenomenology Research Center in the Duquesne Library.

But it was also in this same year (1990) that we were able to realize a dream for each of us – to inaugurate a philosophical seminar in a beautiful place where philosophers and cultural theorists could meet for some eight days and where they could present papers and activate discussions around the work of a living philosopher. The International Philosophical Seminar began in the Alpine region of the South Tyrol in 1990, and this summer will be its 18th year! We have had the opportunity to devote whole seminars to individual texts by Derrida, Nancy, Lyotard, Kristeva, Vattimo, Perniola, Eco, Irigaray, Lacoue-Labarthe, Zizek, and Stiegler. This coming summer will focus on Giorgio Agamben’s *HOMO SACER*. Many of these seminars result in single volume publications.

In 1992 Wilhelm joined the Executive Committee of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, for which I serve as its Executive Director. We had the good fortune to hold its 17th annual conference here at Duquesne. The volume *PANORAMA: PHILOSOPHIES OF THE VISIBLE* (published by Continuum Books in the Textures: Philosophy / Literature / Culture series) results from that conference. Wilhelm continued for a full five year term as a member of the IAPL Executive Committee, and this June we will celebrate his contribution in a special Life and Works of Wilhelm S. Wurzer session at IAPL to be held at Brunel University in West London.

As of several years ago, Wilhelm was no longer able – physically – to attend the IPS, but we continue those seminars always with Wilhelm listed as co-director. And when we had our last dinner together here in Pittsburgh in October 2008 during SPEP, he expressed his desire to return to the IPS as well as to the IAPL – both organizations – one small, the other large – that he cared about very much.

With respect to the IPS, he wrote in Jim Watson's *PORTRAITS OF AMERICAN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHERS*, "for myself [the Südtirol] was to some extent then, and surely now, a kind of Heimat, a peculiar constellation of freedom, wine, and Hexen within the limits of Italianization" (*PACP*, 211). Wilhelm had spent some of his school years in the early fifties in Sterzing-Vipitino just below the Austrian border in the South Tyrol (Alto Adige as the Italians call it) and it was there that we began the IPS and there that Wilhelm yearns to return – to his *Heimat* – Elizabeth Santos, his wife, has promised that he shall return – his *Wiederkehr*. It will be his final *Ausflug* (going-out) for the *Zu-kunft*.

We have had so many projects that we had planned to realize together, that he would have, should have, realized, and perhaps with some time and good fortune, this can happen, among them our joint *PAINTING AND TRUTH* project that Diane Bowser worked on with us.

But time is what we do not always have – and William was hoping to bring out his account of "time capital" – *Zeitkapital*. If only one could have "time" as capital to invest... especially today when financial capital is rapidly diminishing.. But this would require what Wilhelm so often invoked – echoing Heidegger – namely *DENKEN*. How to think time and how to produce capital out of time – and yet thinking – *Denken* – must go on. Wilhelm would have wanted it to go on, in the work of his many students, his friends, his colleagues, his co-symposiasts at the IPS and the IAPL and even SPEP.

Wilhelm always looked for and appreciated the *Naturschöne* that Kant had called for. Wilhelm found it in the plateau between Seceda and Col Raiser in the Dolomites. He found it in German Idealism. He found it in the way he lived his life – elegantly, eloquently, privately, lovingly, passionately, and often in silence – especially now. Thinking the *Naturschöne* for him was thinking the aesthetic – as a way of life – one that he lived to the fullest – but unfortunately not long enough. The birth, life, and thriving of his daughter Cristiana – now 14 – was for him the *Naturschöne* come alive – and she will always be his greatest achievement, his joy, his living on, his *sur-vivre*...

Sharing the many years of photos that I have taken of Wilhelm in many different contexts (on the bulletin boards), is my way of sharing the visibility and expressivity of our friendship with you here today. For Wilhelm, William, Dr. Wurzer, Professor Wurzer, his last *Ausflug* will be our *Zu-Kunft*, our to-come, our living on... As he writes : "My life has always belonged to a kind of *Ausflug*, a celebration of concrete displacements.. moving from Linz, to Sterzing, to Stift Wilhering, to Toronto, to Milwaukee, to Freiburg, to Pittsburgh.. A filmic tour, my life is a joining (*Gefüge*) of cities, towns, beaches, mountains, streams, and postmodern moods." (*PACP*, 213). The postmodern is now our time – his legacy for *Denken* – thinking – to come. But I, for one, will still miss him enormously – every day that remains...

Hugh J. Silverman